Favorable reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

The claims have been amended, where appropriate, to overcome the claim objections and the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph. The claim objection inadvertently referred to Claim 15, rather than Claim 1.

The independent claims have been amended to clarify the manner in which the claimed inventions distinguish patentably from the prior art, including Braun (USP 6,623,226), Schwarz (USP 6,409,446), and Forbes (USP 1,697,814) relied upon in the rejections under 35 U.S.C. 102, and the proposed combination of Braun and Russell (USP 6,705,369), and Webb(USP 1,800,578) relied upon in the rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

Independent Claims 1, 7, 11, and 15 now recite that the sleeve has a longitudinal cross-section in which a cylindrical wall thickness of the sleeve is defined by outermost and innermost substantially parallel lines and the chamfered ends are defined by lines that slope from ends of the outermost line toward the innermost line. With regard to the longitudinal cross-section of Applicant's sleeves, see, e.g., Figs. 5 and 6 of Applicant's drawings.

10

These claims also recite an annular bead inside the sleeve extending circumferentially and inwardly from a location on the inner surface of the sleeve that is substantially equi-distant from the opposite ends of the sleeve and having an exposed innermost surface to engage an outer surface of a piece inserted in the sleeve. Nothing of the sort is taught or suggested by the references, whether considered singularly or in the combination proposed in the rejection.

More particularly, the protrusions 27 of Braun are not substantially equi-distant from the opposite ends of the sleeve, and the sleeve does not have substantially identical chamfered opposite ends.

Schwarz does not disclose a sleeve having a longitudinal cross-section in which a cylindrical wall thickness of the sleeve is defined by outermost and innermost substantially parallel lines and the chamfered ends are defined by lines that slope from ends of the outermost line toward the innermost line. Nor does Schwarz disclose such a sleeve having an annular bead inside the sleeve extending circumferentially and inwardly from a location on an inner surface of the sleeve that is substantially equi-distant from the opposite ends of the

sleeve and having an exposed innermost surface to engage an outer surface of a piece inserted in the sleeve.

Forbes does not disclose a sleeve having a longitudinal cross-section in which a cylindrical wall thickness of the sleeve is defined by outermost and innermost substantially parallel lines and chamfered ends are defined by lines that slope from ends of the outermost line toward the innermost line.

Webb does not disclose a sleeve having a longitudinal cross-section in which a cylindrical wall thickness of the sleeve is defined by outermost and innermost substantially parallel lines and chamfered ends are defined by lines that slope from ends of the outermost line toward the innermost line. Nor does Webb disclose an annular bead inside the sleeve extending circumferentially and inwardly from a location on the inner surface of the sleeve that is substantially equi-distant from the opposite ends of the sleeve.

Russell does not compensate for the deficiencies of Braun in the combination of these references proposed in the rejection of Claims 6 and 20.

This application is now believed to be clearly in condition for allowance.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge to Deposit Account No. 50-1165 any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17 which may be required by this paper, and to credit any overpayment to that Account. If any extension of time is required in connection with the filing of this paper and has not been requested separately, then such extension is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

NHS:kss

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13